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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [PREL](#) [CASC](#) [FJ](#)

SUBJECT: FIJI INTERIM GOVERNMENT RESCINDS DIRECTIVE TO REMOVE  
BARRIERS; PROMISES HELP ON NEC ISSUES

REFS: a) Suva 228

- b) Suva 227

Summary

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11. (SBU) The interim government delivered to us a diplomatic note April 19 stating that it was rescinding the earlier order to remove the barriers that block the street in front of the Embassy. In a press statement, Interim PM Bainimarama said this action was taken, in part, in response to the tragic events at Virginia Tech. He said that Fiji remains a friend of the United States and hopes his decision will be a catalyst for more positive relations. The interim PM also announced that he had directed relevant authorities to provide all assistance necessary to ensure construction of the new embassy compound proceeds without further delay. End summary.

Embassy Barriers Issue Resolved

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12. (SBU) Parmesh Chand, the Permanent Secretary of the PM's Office, delivered to the Ambassador a diplomatic note April 19 rescinding the interim government's earlier order to have the street barriers in front of the Embassy removed. Chand said interim PM Bainimarama made the decision after consulting staff and reconsidering the issue in view of U.S. plans to start construction of a new embassy in Suva and in light of the recent tragedy at Virginia Tech. Chand said the interim PM asked him to convey the "grief we share with the U.S." over the Virginia Tech killings. (Note: Bainimarama sent a letter of condolence to President Bush April 18. Text is reported ref a.) Chand said that, even though the tragedy was domestic in nature, it brings home the importance of safety and security issues. The interim government would like to "team up" with the U.S. to ensure the embassy's security and has decided the best way to do that is to preserve the status quo. Chand shared with the Ambassador a press release the interim government would release, with Embassy concurrence, on April 19. We concurred and the news is out. The texts of the diplomatic note and the press release follow in paragraphs 8 and 9, respectively.

13. (SBU) The Ambassador thanked Chand for his efforts and asked him to convey thanks to the interim PM for his decision and for the words for condolence about the Virginia Tech tragedy. He predicted Washington would be pleased with the interim government's decision.

Interim Government Seeks  
Improved Relations with US

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14. (SBU) Chand noted that the interim government hopes relations with the United States, and with the international community in general, can get back on track. The press release from the interim PM makes a strong pitch for the renewal of positive relations, noting that "Fiji continues to consider itself a friend of the United States, no matter the rhetoric and actions that have strained our relations in the past few months." The statement notes the long-standing ties between the RFMF and American forces and our cooperation in Iraq, the Sinai and other locations. The statement says, "I am hopeful that the U.S. government will accept this decision in the manner and the spirit in which it has been taken and in some ways it could be a catalyst to the removal of any misunderstanding between our two countries."

15. (SBU) The Ambassador responded that the United States has the same goals as the Pacific Island Forum countries, the EU and others. That is, a rapid return of Fiji to democracy. If the interim government can bring its policies in line, the U.S. will be happy to move forward.

NEC Issue Will Also be Solved Soon

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16. (SBU) Chand reiterated his earlier statement (ref b) that he fully expected the NEC visa issue to be solved when interim Foreign Minister Nailatikau returns from Brussels early next week. The interim PM's press statement notes the positive economic impact of the NEC and states, "I have directed relevant authorities of Government to provide all the assistance necessary to ensure that there are no further delays in commencement of construction of this complex."

Comment

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17. (SBU) We agreed that the interim PM's office would make the announcement and we would simply say publicly that we are gratified the issue has been resolved through diplomatic means so that embassy security can be maintained. We have worked the issue from various angles and have kept public comment to the bare minimum, not wanting to inflame passions. Chand and MFA PermSec Ligairi are both professional interlocutors. Clearly, after thinking the issue over a few days and receiving advice from useful quarters, interim PM Bainimarama realized that the status quo is best for all parties. We look forward to resolution of the NEC visa issue and the start of construction later this month.

Text of Diplomatic Note from Fiji's  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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18. (SBU) Begin Text.

Note No. 202/07 of April 19, 2007

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Government of the Republic of the Fiji Islands presents its compliments to the Embassy of the United States of America and has the honour to refer to the former's Note No. 178/07 dated 5 April 2007 and the latter's reply Note No. 35 dated 12 April on the removal of security barriers on Loftus Street and wishes to convey hereunder the reviewed position of the Government of Fiji on the subject.

The Government of Fiji having reconsidered the serious nature of the global security environment and the special security needs in it of US Government properties and personal abroad has decided to rescind with immediate effect the earlier directive for the removal of security barriers on Loftus Street. The plans and commitment by the US Government to build within the next 24 months a new chancery outside of the City of Suva at Tamavua was a major consideration and to this end (sic) will provide all the assistance necessary to ensure that no further delay is encountered in the commencement of construction of this complex.

The Government of Fiji is cognizant that the US's leading role in

the war on terrorism exposes itself to insurgent elements around the world and as such takes seriously its hosting obligations under the Vienna Convention in allowing relevant security measures to be taken to supplement the basic (sic) that it provides.

The Government of Fiji was also saddened to learn of the unwarranted loss of American lives in the senseless shooting at the Virginia Tech University on Monday 16 April, which again demonstrated the real security threat faced by Americans everywhere. The Government extends its condolences to the US Government and its people at this time of their loss.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Government of the Republic of the Fiji Islands attaches herewith a Media Statement to be released by the Office of the Prime Minister on the above-mentioned subject and also wishes to convey to the Embassy of the United States of America the assurances of its highest consideration.

Text of Interim Prime Minister's  
Media Statement

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19. (U) Begin Text

Media Statement By Prime Minister's Office (Thursday 19 April, 2007)

#### PRIME MINISTER SHARES U.S SECURITY CONCERNS

Fiji shares the grief and sorrow which the Government and the people of the United States of America are going through as a result of the unfortunate and barbaric shootings at Virginia Tech University.

Given this sad and shocking incident and the necessity to be mindful of the security concerns and safety of personnel of the United States of America at the Embassy, as well as our own people, Prime Minister Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama has decided to review his directive for removal of the barriers at Loftus Street.

"I feel and my heart goes out to the families of those who have died

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in the shootings as well as those who were injured. This tragedy has again driven home the fact that in this global environment, external threats to our national and personal security are very real. We all need to work together to make our lives safe.

It is also during times of personal and national trials that your real friends come to fore. Fiji continues to consider itself a friend of the United States, no matter the rhetoric and actions that have strained our relations in the past few months. The Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) has also developed lasting bond and comradeship with American Defense Forces having collaborated and worked closely with them in Solomon Islands, Iraq and Sinai. We are also together with the US and other peace loving nations on the war on terror.

With that in mind and as a gesture of our solidarity with the Government and the people of the United States of America during this time of national mourning and grief, I have decided to rescind with immediate effect my earlier directive for the lifting of the barriers at Loftus Street, leading to the US Embassy complex here in Suva.

I am hopeful that the US Government will accept this decision in the manner and the spirit in which it has been taken and in some ways it could be a catalyst to the removal of any misunderstanding between our two countries."

"In taking this decision, I have also considered the plans and commitment by the US Government to build a brand new complex to house the Embassy and diplomatic staff away from Suva City to Tamavua. This is a \$30 million investment, and will create jobs and income for 500 people during the phase of construction over the next two years. I have accordingly directed relevant authorities of Government to provide all the assistance necessary to ensure that

there are no further delays in commencement of construction of this complex.

My office has been assured that the real works on the construction of the complex will start within this month providing that the remaining approvals are finalized. This is a significant development as apart from investment and jobs, it would mean that we no longer have to worry about security issues when this building is ready in 24 months time. This essentially means that the barriers on Loftus Street would become redundant and would not be necessary after this period."

"Fiji recognizes the long standing and important links it has with the USA in areas of trade, economic, defence and other strategic issues. It is in the spirit of these links that we need to continue to work together closely and further deepen our relationship. Whilst I can understand their position on the situation in Fiji on the basis of principles, I, at the same time, would like to plead with the Government of the United States to sympathetically understand the situation of Fiji and to give us the benefit of some time, and also the cooperation and assistance that we need in our efforts to return Fiji to practices of good governance and genuine parliamentary democracy."

End Text.

Dinger